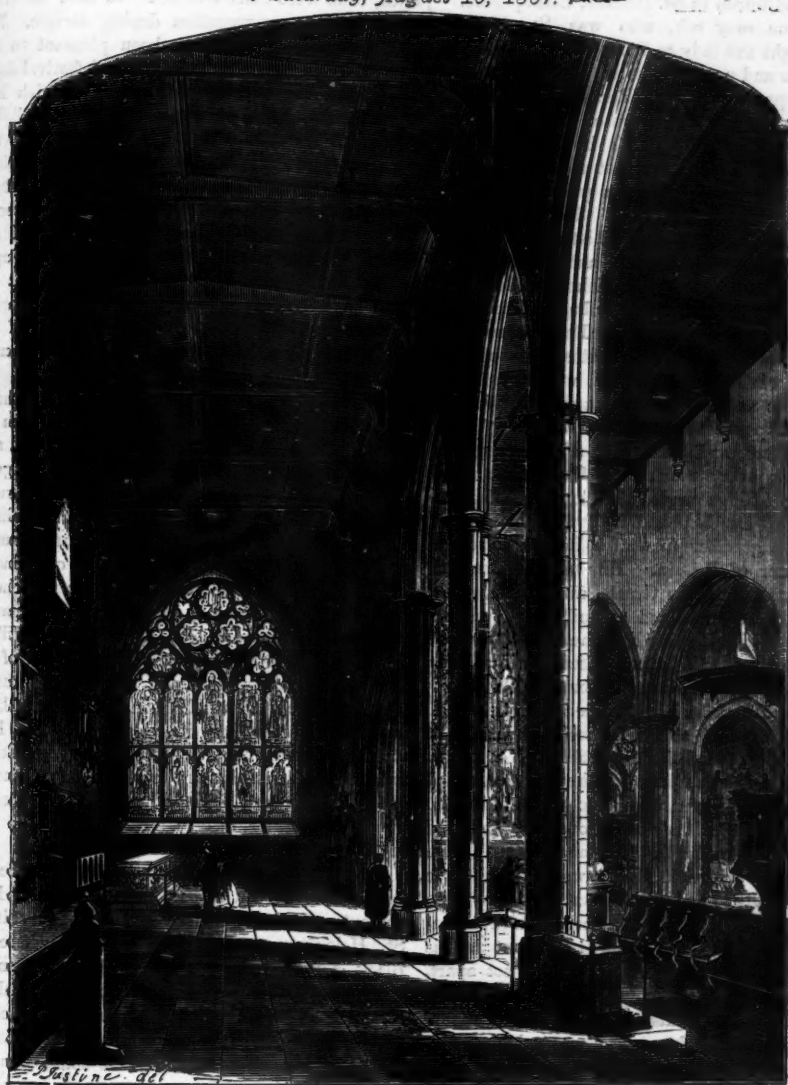


# THE BIVVER

Saturday, August 10, 1867.



## ST. HELEN'S CHURCH, BISHOPSGATE.

THE GRAVES OF SIR THOMAS GRESHAM AND SIR JOHN CROSBY.

**ST. HELEN'S CHURCHYARD** is not visited, in our hearts on entering the quiet nook, but it we presume, by artists searching for the picturesque, or by the lovers of the romantic longing was lost in one minute. Everything round the churchyard spoke of the earth and its ways. Those respectable commercial offices whispered

£ s. d., on every side; and close to one of the church doors were piled up huge packages, hampers, and hogsheds. The churchyard itself seemed much in the way, as if wanted for the site of a warehouse. Certainly, the world treads very closely on the heels of the Church in St. Helen's, Bishopsgate.

Here some may ask, who was St. Helen? What brought the lady to Bishopsgate? Did she rent a house and pay rates here? We regret our inability to prove that St. Helen ever set her foot within the parish of Bishopsgate. In truth, there is a dispute about the lady's birth-place. The early British historians say that she was born in Britain, that her father was a prince—no other than the famous "King Cole." This is also the opinion of the Roman Catholic historian, Cardinal Baronius, and of the English antiquaries, Camden, Archbishop Usher, and Bishop Stillington. Surely that is sufficient; it may be said, to settle the birth-place of any person. Perhaps so; but the obstinate historian Gibbon utters his opinion that Helen was born in Bithynia, and even affirms that she was an innkeeper's daughter! We are, however, disposed to stand up for the "King Cole" pedigree, and trust that all Bishopsgate, or, at least, every resident in St. Helen's, will support us. Helen made, what is now called, "a good match," her husband being a noble named Constantius, grand-nephew of a Roman emperor, and governor of Britain. Her son became the famous Constantine the Great; and Helen, when eighty years old, resolved to build a church on Calvary. While digging for the foundations of the church, she is said to have discovered the very cross on which the Saviour suffered. The story spread into all lands; everywhere it was believed. Helen was revered as the especial favourite of Heaven, and received the title "Sancta," or saint. Part of the cross was kept for the new Church of the Holy Sepulchre, part sent to Constantinople, and so many pieces distributed over the East and West that the multiplied fragments would have formed many crosses! Helen, we are told, gave two of the nails to her son Constantine—one to be attached to the bridle of his horse as a preservative in perils, and the other to be set in his diadem. Three days were afterwards set apart, to commemorate Helen's great discovery, and to preserve her name to distant ages. "The invention [discovery] of the cross" was celebrated on May 3rd; "the exaltation of the cross" on Holyrood Day, September 14th; and St. Helen herself received honour on August 18th.

With such traditions, exalting the name of this British saint, it was natural that a community of English nuns should select her for their patron. When, therefore, "William, the son of William the Goldsmith," about the year 1212, founded a Benedictine nunnery in Bishopsgate, it was dedicated

to "the Holy Cross and St. Helen." An ancient church had long stood here, and around this the dwellings for the nuns and a noble hall were erected. A part of the church, the present north aisle, was appropriated for the exclusive use of the nuns, who were thus tempted "to look off their books" at the congregation during service. But the arrangement may have been pleasant to all. The ladies thus saw, on Sundays and festival days, a little of the outer world, and the parish had the effective choral aid of the "nuns' quire." We cannot, however, avoid the suspicion that the younger sisters imbibed some secular notions from this frequent contact with the world. Reginald Kentwode, Dean of St. Paul's in 1439, seems to have had the same fear. He was one of the official inspectors of the nunnery, and drew up a set of rules for the sisters, which show that the good man had been ruffled by some naughty conduct on the part of the ladies. One of the regulations most sternly prohibits "the nuns from looking at strangers" when in church.

Close by the nunnery was the famous Bishop's Gate, from which the present street takes its name. Here fairs would at times be held, religious processions be formed, and gatherings of the City archers often add to the pomp of many a holiday. This was no common gate. Tradition fixed its erection in the seventh century, naming as the builder, Erkenwald, Bishop of London. The great Alfred had placed it under the charge of two Earls of Mercia. Another bishop, named William, had repaired it in the year when William I. entered London, and the great guild of the Hanse merchants obtained important trading privileges from Henry III., on condition of keeping the Bishop's Gate in constant repair. Four statues adorned the structure; the Bishops Erkenwald and William stood there in stone for many ages, and the two Earls of Mercia kept a silent watch over their charge. Such were the surroundings of St. Helen's from the very first.

What a shock to a mere antiquary must be the contrast between the past of this place and the present. Counting-houses stand on the site of St. Helen's convent; merchants deal where the Black Nuns lived; St. Mary of Bethlehem has gone away; not a stone of the famous Bishop's Gate can be found, and, as for the statues of the two bishops and earls, the worst must be feared. There is, indeed, a surmise that some stones of the gate, and perhaps an arm or a leg of the statues, might be found at the bottom of the Thames, near the site of Old London Bridge. When the old City gates were removed, many of the stones, it is said, were thrown into the river, near the decaying piers of the bridge, to break the rush of the water against the tottering structure.

The antiquaries have, however, some ground for comfort. All the old buildings have not wholly disappeared. St. Ethelburga's Church still stands, looking somewhat puzzled at the changes around. St. Botolph, too, is vigorous, though in quite a modern dress, and not looking in the least a Saxon. The "nuns' quire" remains as a part of the present church; and has not the Hall of Crosby Place been saved from ruin by modern zeal and taste?

How has it happened that all traces of St. Helen's nunnery have so entirely vanished? The answer is short and simple. The last prioress, Dame Mary Rollesley, surrendered the nunnery, with all its buildings, to the Crown, on the 25th of November, 1539, a year which saw the dissolution of nearly 200 great English abbeys. In the following year the greater part of the site was sold to "William Crane and Margaret his wife," and in 1542, the nuns' church came into the hands of Richard Cromwell. Some years later we find Michael and Edward Stanhope buying the priory and church for £610 18s. 7d., they agreeing to pay £20 yearly for the support of a vicar. Later still, the hall of the convent was bought by the Company of Leather Sellers, who used it for their meetings, until about the year 1799, when, being ruinous, the whole was taken down, and the present St. Helen's Place built on the site. Every part of the priory has thus gradually disappeared, except the church, and some subterranean fragments of the ancient pile. Crosby Hall stands on part of the priory estate, having been built by Sir John Crosby, in 1470, on land leased to him by the prioress, Dame Alice Ashfield.

Richard III. may have listened to the chant of the nuns' quire during his short abode in Crosby Place; but he certainly never even dreamed that the walls of his temporary abode would, in a future age, be covered with advertisements, calling on the public to see an actor, named John Kemble, in the character of Richard III. Such play-bills covered the old knightly mansion in the year 1817. This hall, once the largest in London after Westminster, has had a strange history. The brief home of a king, the abode of an alderman, the lodging of the French ambassador, a Presbyterian chapel, a packer's warehouse, and now, in its restored state, a literary institution.

The reader, who may visit the church of St. Helen's, will remember that both Crosby Square and St. Helen's Place stand on the former site of the nunnery. But the church, or rather the north aisle, is the only remaining part of the old conventual pile. This fact must invest the building with some interest; but how much is this increased when we remember that here one of the most noted of the old merchant princes of England is buried. The Gresham grasshopper on the

Royal Exchange may not remind the multitude of the simple church of St. Helen, but there must be many in the City of London and in England to whom the name of Sir Thomas Gresham is still a word of power.

Let us now enter St. Helen's Church, and stand for a few minutes by the tombs of men who well represent the England of the sixteenth century. The church itself requires but little notice. There, in the north aisle, was the "nuns' quire," formerly separated from the nave by a screen. A small figure of St. Helen, over the door of the south aisle, reminds us of the once famous mother of Constantine the Great; and the arms of the Mercers' Company, and those of Sir Thomas Gresham, give some relief to the east window of the north aisle.

We cannot pause to notice in detail the richly-carved tomb of Sir William Pickering, more stately than many a king's; or the monument of Bancroft, who, being desirous of living in City memories, left money for the repair of his tomb, for an annual sermon on himself, and for his almshouses at Mile End. Sir John Crosby's tomb demands a minute's notice. The window of his noble hall looks upon the church, and reminds us of the rank held by this "merchant in wool." He was a member of the Grocers' Company; was knighted by Edward IV., whose exhausted finances must have often required the aid of rich merchants. Little did the king suspect that the death of his children would be devised in Crosby Place, by his own brother. Sir John died in the year 1475, leaving large sums to nunneries, monasteries, and prisons. He was buried in a part of the church then called the Chapel of the Holy Ghost.

But Sir Thomas Gresham is the greatest name in the records of St. Helen's. The week's cares were over on Saturday, November 21st, 1579, and the merchant had reached his noble house in Bishopsgate, a little after six in the evening; when a sudden attack of apoplexy ended his life, at the age of sixty. The great Lombard Street banker, the founder of the Royal Exchange, the originator of Gresham College, and the trusted ambassador of Elizabeth, was buried in the north-eastern angle of the church on the 15th of December. Two hundred poor men and women, in black cloaks, followed his body to the grave. His uncle, Sir John Gresham, and his father, Sir Richard, were both men of note, in the City and at Court; but the fame of Gresham rests upon his own noble generosity and high-minded patriotism.

Thousands pass every day down Lombard Street, by the bank of Stone, Martin, and Co., without recollecting that there formerly hung Gresham's sign—the grasshopper. For a long time this grasshopper was allowed to remain, a

fit memorial of the famous merchant, and it is still preserved as a relic of olden days.

Though the house in Bishopsgate Street, with its large gardens, and nearness to Lombard Street, was the principal residence of Sir Thomas Gresham towards the close of life, his four country seats had their special attractions. Westacre Priory, Intwood Hall, and Austin Canons, in Norfolk, offered a distant retreat from the excitements of London; while Osterly Park, near Brentford, a few miles from the metropolis, gave the "royal merchant" the opportunity of splendidly receiving the queen, or entertaining foreigners of rank. It was at Osterly that he set up a paper-mill, in the hope of stimulating his countrymen to make finer paper for themselves, instead of being dependent upon Italy, France, and Germany.

Perhaps some lady readers may wonder that nothing has been said about Sir Thomas Gres-

ham's wife. The reason is that little is known. We must ask the ladies to be satisfied with the statement that she was honoured and loved by her husband, and that the curiously-wrought double wedding-ring is yet preserved.

We have not been regarding Sir Thomas Gresham as the type of a character long since departed. London has her Greshams still; and when they cease to exist the great City will fall from her seat of honour.

A stroll round the church of St. Helen's, and through Crosby Square, will not only recall the days of old monastic establishments, and the legends of almost forgotten saints, but will bring before us men who combined nobility of life with profitable commerce. The memories of warriors and statesmen have a high value; but the influence of such a name as Gresham extends over many ages, elevating and refining thousands of England's busy workers.

## B A C K B I T E R S .

BY THE REV. W. M. STATHAM.



JOHN LEECH has left a clever sketch after this order: Three energetic aquatic gentlemen are pulling hard and fast up the river: as they are passing a bed of reeds, two majestic swans glide forth; and, as the head oar is bending to his work, the larger swan, in a fit of irritation, drives his beak into the back of the jolly young waterman, who is forthwith made to say, "Halloo! —hi! —police! Back water, Jack! we've got into a nest of swans, and they're a-pitching into me!" Very uncomfortable, no doubt; but not half so deplorably bad as to be backbitten in a moral sense. In the first place, there is this difference: you don't feel it at the time; but, like a venomous wound, its poison rankles afterwards: and, in the second place, you cannot get at your enemy, and take fair and honest means of silencing his inuendoes and making him smart for his misrepresentations. Backbiters know all this, and they inwardly snigger, comfortably and serenely, over their work. Now, it is on this very ground that backbiting, apart from its essential evil, is so unmanly, and, I may add, unwomanly too. There are swans in society of both sexes; and, if they like, they can take it out of you amazingly. The evil complained of may well be called backbiting, for the victim is so utterly defenceless, and so unconscious for the time being of the wrong which is perpetrated. I can sympathise with dear old Briggs, when he got home and found his newly-painted gates covered with boyish al-

frescoes, accompanied by the repeated inscription, in questionable spelling, "No Popery," "Briggs is a Fool!" But a man's gates are not his best belongings; and thoughtless boys, scribbling for fun, are not like spiteful people, scratching off the enamel of your character with malice prepense.

Backbiting, however, is not always done in this spirit; that I quite admit: it is sometimes the result of an attempt to please another by quizzing or satirising an absentee. There is a kind of natural complimentariness towards each other in two friends who assume their possession of all the virtues, and who fire and fizz away at their neighbours' reputations. This explains, to some extent, the philosophy of backbiting: we make ourselves appear so much better, in proportion as we make others appear worse. Backbiting, however, is not always a harmlessly false criticism, it is sometimes seriously detrimental to a man's position and character. Men have, ere now, lost posts of honour, of emolument, of trust, and of influence, through biters at their back. To tear the quivering flesh out of a man with your teeth, is not one-half so shameful and cruel as to hack away at his reputation. Some arnica and a little plaster would remedy the former, but the latter is often as irremediable as it is wrongful. Backbiting is often more or less connected with foolish talking and jesting. It is a relief to turn from the bad puns which have made us a little contemptible, to the neighbour whom we perhaps envy far more than we care to say. If you have noticed how con-



versation turns to the character of some absentee, you will find it is very often Scene II., after we have to some extent lost the power of distinguishing ourselves according to our desire. Backbiting is unmanly and un-English, and certainly, we must all admit, most un-Christian: it lowers the tone of our own minds, and it deteriorates the moral atmosphere in which we live; whereas healthy and earnest outspokenness to our brother is one of the grandest characteristics of human nature. That man is to be honoured and loved who tells you of your fault, and also speaks the truth in love.

Backbiting is often connected with Fore-painting. The old proverb has it, "Who paints me before blackens me behind." Flattery is part of the very being of a backbiter. He who is coward enough to smite behind, is often poltroon enough to paint you before. Anyhow, backbiting is sooner or later detected; and it's a sorrowful hour in your history when you come upon the footsteps of the backbiter. You take your moral line and you measure the boots in the snow, and you say, "These are Jones's boots!" Ah, how well you know the cut and shape of them! "Et tu, Brute," you say, and from that moment you feel an indescribable sensation in your finger-ends when you see Jones again. Oh! to have one thorough good smash at him!—to send his hat into the road, his spectacles into the drain, and his prim face into pallor! But you mustn't do that, and Jones knows you mustn't. He knows just enough of Christianity to know that even then, when you are reviled you must not revile again, and that you must endure contradiction against yourself. He knows that to return evil for evil is not the Gospel. And you have to bear it often without a definite ground of complaint, for how can you reproduce an old conversation and old associations? Jones never commits himself. It's the spirit of the matter that damages you, and ghosts cannot be put into witness-boxes. Jones knows that full well.

Backbiting, pleasant enough to the biter at the time, is painful enough afterwards, even if he is not found out. It lowers his self-respect, it injures his peace. Supposing him not to be "past feeling," the reflection must come home to his heart, that this kind of thing is not noble, dignified, or beautiful. He becomes not loveless, but certainly less lovable in his own eyes; and there is no punishment like that. God has constructed our nature so wondrously, that self-inflicted castigation is worse than the cat-o'-nine-tails even of the world's criticism. We get that, and after a fashion sometimes most severe; but I question if it equals the dull, gnawing pain of a disapproving conscience.

Backbiting is much more terrible to some people than to others. There are amazingly sensitive persons, who are almost slaves to the estimates formed of them by others. I think it was

Byron who said that "the praise of the greatest of mankind could not take away the sting from the censure of the meanest." On the other hand, there are those who go on their way little disturbed by it. It is told such a one that B. said so-and-so of him. "Did he, though?" is the answer. "Well, I cannot keep watch and ward over my fame; I have enough to do to look after my character."

Yes, and it would be well if we could all do that. Let a man act thus, and his fame will come all straight and smooth. What a wonderfully suggestive text is that, my friend—"He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

I have said that backbiters in the end get found out. More than that, they get a price put upon them. People not only discount as they go on, but the backbiter's criticisms are like cheap, fly-blown articles in shop-windows—they are not commonly thought of much account. People that know Jones do not estimate at much value his backstroking or his backbiting; in fact, so far as my observation has gone, the backbiter is most formidable to those that fear him. When once you take into consideration that he is, most probably, a known man amongst his acquaintance, you can let him take a good gnaw at you, without much wincing under the operation.

My friend suggests that all people do not know the backbiter as such. I admit the fact, and herein lies the danger. It takes some time to find out that under that smooth tongue lies the poison of asps: the venom circulates in the parish and the neighbourhood to a most alarming extent.

Of all beings that do not deserve pity, I think the backbiter is one: he will make homes miserable, and drag beautiful reputations in the dust, without much remorse. If any man deserves to be tarred and feathered, in the old English fashion, it is the backbiter; he shows no mercy, spares no age, retracts no wrong, and smooths all over, when detected and defeated, by the saponaceous declaration that "he was mistaken then!"

There is a beautiful prayer in the Litany of the Church of England: "From envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, good Lord, deliver us;" and I am sure if we thoroughly drink into the spirit of the Gospel, that prayer will be very often on our lips and in our hearts. What is it that so often gives gall to our speech, but a want of charity? "He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour," is one of the characters projected on to the canvas of the Old Testament writings as among those who shall abide in the tabernacle of God.

An old disease this is of humanity. Most manifestly there is something in the tendency common

to all races—Western and Eastern, too; but what a blessed fact it is that the Gospel of Christ is adapted to all races, all ages, and all experiences of man: so that he finds in *that* a specific for every malady, and a successful panacea for all the moral wrongs of his soul. No other power can achieve what Christianity can. In the schools of medicine we have physicians skilled in some special department of physical science, a specialty which employs and exhausts all their energy and skill. The Great Physician is not thus limited by time or skill: he is infinite in power, wisdom, tenderness, and love. He is able to say to the prayer of every supplicant for help, what he said in the days of his flesh: "I

will come and heal him." Amongst the ills which are to be cured, a backbiting tongue stands not last amongst those which need the regenerating influence of Christianity. We may be members of any particular church we like, and look lost in the profound speculations of our favourite preacher; but unless we are considerate of our neighbour's reputation, and charitable to our neighbour's faults, we shall be still far from the kingdom of heaven. We may become experts even at religious appearances; but it is far wiser and better to seek divine grace and strength so to walk that our brethren may never feel: "He flattered with his lips, but war was in his heart."

### THE DAGMAR CROSS.

A LEGEND.



HERE the angry billows of the Baltic,  
With the North Sea meeting, surge and swirl,

And on rocky reefs and shores basaltic  
High the snowy foam-flakes upward curl,—  
Valdemar the Victor rode to glory,  
While his deeds were sung in minstrel rhyme,  
Greatest of all kings—so runs the story;  
'Twas in Denmark, in the olden time.

Fair the Lady Dagmar was, and saintly,  
And the fierce king bowed him at her feet;  
Said he, while her cheek was flushing faintly,  
"What gift on my marriage that is meet  
For the bride of Valdemar, O maiden,  
Shall I bring to grace the marriage morn?  
See, my slaves are near, and heavy laden  
With the jewels Danish queens have worn."

And the lady made him answer, lowly:  
"Gifts of precious stones are not for me;  
Better far are noble deeds and holy  
Than a mighty kingdom held in fee:  
From the plough-tax wilt thou free the peasant?  
And release the captive from his chain?  
Lo! I ask, my lord, no costly present—  
This my marriage gift, and this my gain."

Answered then the monarch, like a lover:  
"Such a gift befits not thee, my Queen;"  
And o'er Dagmar, as he bent above her,  
Flung he chain and cross of golden sheen.  
Holy figures, wrought in wondrous fashion  
By Byzantine workmen glowed thereon;  
Pictured was the suffering Saviour's Passion;  
There the Virgin stood, and there Saint John.

Then away, by barren height and foreland,  
Rode King Valdemar again to war;  
Round him swept in fury storms of Norland,  
And the storms of battle wilder far.  
While the good Queen Dagmar, ever tender,  
Richer harvest in kind deeds would glean;  
And to this day Danish hearts will render  
Loving homage to the "Darling Queen."

Homeward came King Valdemar in gladness,  
With the victor-wreath around his head;  
In the royal halls was silent sadness—  
Dagmar slept the long sleep of the dead.  
In her handmaid Kerstin's arms, when riding  
Up the long street came the king that day,  
Still the rose-flush on her cheek abiding,  
Dead, the young queen in her beauty lay.

And the king a mighty voice of sorrow  
Raised, and called on Dagmar by her name:  
"Dagmar, live! and glad me on the morrow  
With one kiss!" and wondrous answer came  
From the dead; and still the old petition  
Sprang from her loved lips, a ghostly prayer:  
"Free the outlaws from their lone condition,  
Let the weary captives freedom share."

Low in Ringsted, with the cross that tarried  
Still upon her breast, the queen they laid;  
Fairer, purer corse was never carried  
Home, to rest beneath the church's shade.  
Years rolled on, and Christian's royal pleasure  
Ope'd the tomb; and since death knows no  
loss,  
Now old Denmark boasts no dearer treasure  
Than the young Queen Dagmar's holy cross.

H. SAVILE CLARKE.

"ROUND THE COURT."

BY A RENT-COLLECTOR.

ON THE BRINK.



HE shoemaker was by no means the only drunkard in the court. A spirit, whose power amounts to a kind of demoniacal possession, seems to haunt such localities, constantly trying to lay hold of those who live there, and to drag them over the brink of the great gulf of intemperance, where he holds his victims, "tied and bound with the chain of their sin," till he hands them over to the keeping of death. To the harassed with work and anxiety, to the depressed with care and weariness, to the half-starved on coarse and insufficient food, to the half-poisoned by foul and lifeless air, the drink-demon is ever at hand, to offer relief from anxiety and depression, and to rally the sinking powers by the fatal glass. It would take not one chapter more, but many, to tell of his triumphs, even on one small spot of city ground; and every triumph might be written in tears and blood.

On a Monday, and it might have been on other days as well, as the clock of a neighbouring church pointed to twelve, a group of women might be seen hastily issuing from a gin-shop in the neighbourhood of the court. Some had infants in their arms, and little children hanging by their skirts. They were evidently, every one of them, victims to intemperance. Looking up to the clock, they hurried away in all directions, but not till I had recognised one of them, as she ran past and disappeared in the court. On asking the meaning of their hasty retreat, I was told that the stroke of twelve warned them to rush off and "sing up something for their husbands' dinners," most of whom were employed at an iron-works close at hand.

The woman I had recognised was the wife of an iron-worker. They held a single room at No. 3. Smith—for he held the prolific title of his trade—was a first-rate workman, and earned from thirty-six to fifty shillings a week. He had only two boys, of eight and ten, all their successors having died in infancy—the last overlaid and suffocated between Saturday night and Sunday morning. It was called, no doubt, an accidental death; but the cause which led to it could hardly be called accidental, for it occurred regularly every Saturday. Neither husband nor wife ever went to bed sober on the last night of the week.

Both had gone over the brink long ago, and utterly hopeless and infatuated was the life they led. When the works closed on Saturday afternoon, Smith came out with his pockets full, and

made his way, with a knot of his "mates," to the "Hammerman's Arms," to pay up his weekly score, and have what they called a "wet." The public-house was kept by one of the sub-foremen of the works; and this man would often pay a good hand for a piece of work, and set it down as his own, to make his employers believe that he was active in their service; while he was, in reality, idling away his time at his tavern, and inducing the men to do the same. Of course he knew their respective means, and would allow them to run up any score which they could pay off at the end of the week. He was even very obliging in the matter of lending a shilling or two for other purposes, when his customers ran short of cash, probably to buy the necessaries of life for themselves and their families. Thus Smith's supply of beer never failed. It was only on Saturday that he hastened the consumption by stronger liquors; but he was never entirely sober at any time of the week, nor, for that matter, at any hour of the day, and his score was, therefore, a very long one.

At the preliminary part of the Saturday's proceedings the wife did not interfere. She knew the hour at which the works closed, and could calculate the time which her husband would take to settle up at the "Hammerman's Arms;" and she usually met him as he issued thence with what remained of his earnings. Then the pair adjourned together to another public-house, where they shared the drink; if not the money, with wonderful amity. They would then pay for the provisions taken up at the greengrocer's during the week, lay up a little stock for the morrow, and begin the evening's drinking in earnest. Later, they might be seen, both intoxicated, wending their unsteady way homeward, the man a few yards in advance of the woman, having parted company in some drunken brawl. On Sunday, the drink was consumed at home, the children fetching it from the public-house, and getting a share of the half-poisonous stuff for themselves. Very little money was left by Monday, the wife generally managing to secrete a shilling or two for her own private debauchation on that day.

In spite of all this, Smith would make his appearance at the works, perhaps after breakfast, on Monday, though it would take two or three glasses of gin, or even brandy, to steady his skilful hands. Neither Sunday nor Saturday saw any difference in his appearance. The same grime-covered face and hands; the same grease-

coated, ancient garments—indeed, the grease was considered necessary to the adhesion of their parts; and the same battered hat was pressed over his eyes. He was always at work; and, even when his head would seem hopelessly muddled, his hands did not lose their strength or cunning. Thus he was not dismissed, though some of his doings were more than questionable, and more than half-suspected.

The men worked partly by time and partly by piece, according to the nature of the work they were engaged upon; and it was a curious fact that Smith could make more when the two methods were combined, than he could make by either of them singly. He had solved the problem by adding two and two and making five. But this is so common that an employer has said, "If I send three men to a job, it would pay me to employ a fourth to look after them." If the time they waste, or use for their own purposes, is charged to a customer of their master's, they think there is no harm done. There are some who hold that constant indulgence in drinking produces a species of moral insanity, and I am inclined to think that it is so.

In the same house lived a young man employed at the iron-works. He was newly-married, and his wife was a pretty, young creature, evidently without much strength either of body or mind. She seemed to be very proud of her husband, and of all his belongings. Their room was nicely furnished, and boasted a book-shelf, which I was invited to inspect, the young wife telling me that her Tom was "a great reader." Among the volumes were Rollin's "Ancient History," "Half-Hours with the Best Authors," an illustrated Shakespeare, and a book on mechanics; but, for the most part, they consisted of the better class of popular serials, well preserved and carefully bound. The young wife was very anxious that I should see her husband; but he was, of course, absent at his work.

At length, one day—it was a partial holiday—she opened the door, and, seeing me, whispered, with an air of triumph, "Come in; he's at home to-day."

On entering, I saw a really fine-looking young man, with a face full of intellect and determination, but grave and sad in expression. There was a slight air of languor in his attitude that gave me the impression of delicate health, or, rather, delicate temperament—that susceptibility to unhealthful influences which is so marked in some highly-nervous organisations. He was not particularly civil, and not at all of his wife's communicative turn, so I went away, obliged to content myself with a rapid survey of the outer man.

It was some time before an opportunity for

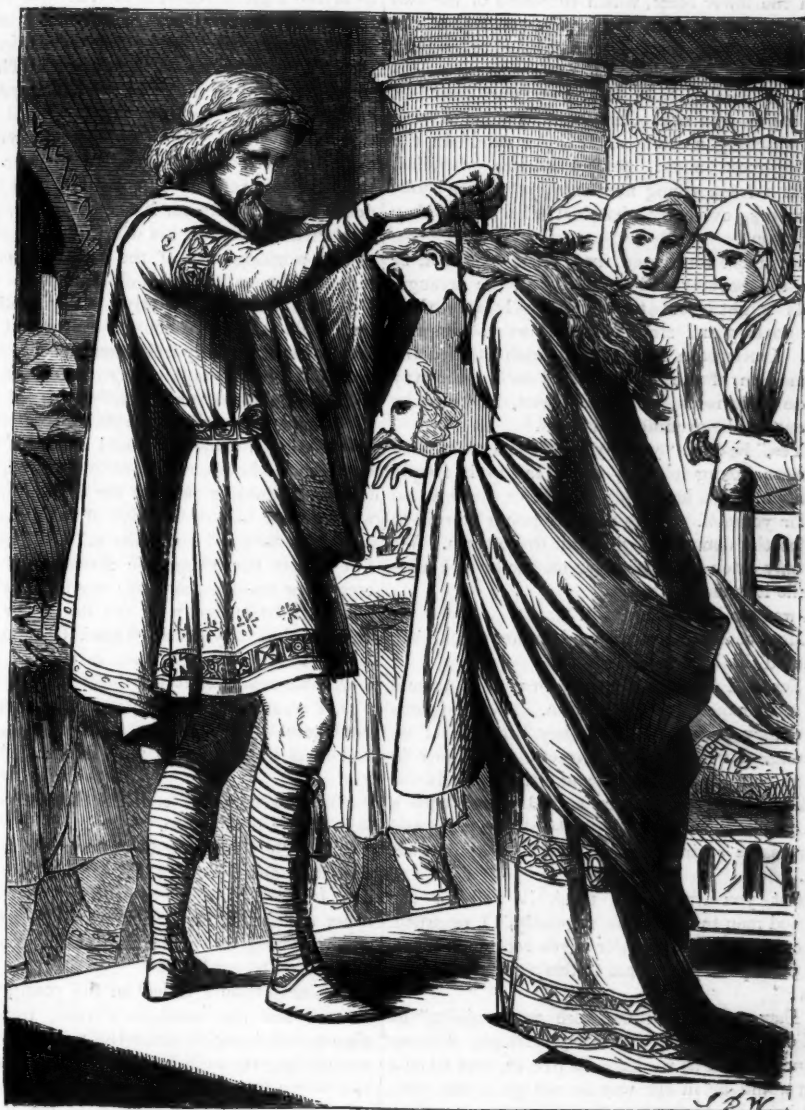
further acquaintance occurred; and, in the meantime, I thought the young wife was looking somewhat pale and downcast. She told me that her husband, with the aid of a few of his fellows, and with the promise of support from others, had started a club, and was working hard at it. I could see very well that she hated the club with her whole heart: nor was she so very much to blame for this.

From her point of view, it was certainly rather hard that, after spending the day, with the exception of the dinner-hour, alone, she should be left to spend the evening alone too. To see her husband come in and swallow his tea with an abstracted air, and be off "horganising," as she styled it, till ten or eleven o'clock at night; and to have him return then, unable to speak with exhaustion, was rather provoking. It was a great deal worse than the reading, and she had been a little jealous of that at first; but, then, she could sit and look at him, and watch his grave, handsome face light up from within with the living light of thought and fancy or feeling; and he would read out, or explain what had moved him, till she was completely won. But she had often a good cry over the club—poor little soul! She was told that it would keep many a man out of the public-house, besides improving their minds; but she could not expand into a social reformer all at once; she could not get beyond her Tom, and she could not see that his mind could by any possibility be improved.

The next time I found the young husband at home; he was suffering from a slight attack of inflammation. The club formed a topic of interest between us, and I was speedily on a more confidential footing. I was invited to visit the club, which I promised to do, as soon as its secretary was well enough to be at his post again.

One evening, accordingly, I made my way to the club. It was at the corner of a little side-street, and exactly opposite was a gin-palace, which had taken in two or three houses on both sides of the angle. The promoters of the club had taken a house, into which one of them entered as tenant, paying rent for the part he occupied. His wife engaged to supply tea and coffee, and other simple refreshments, getting a small allowance weekly for her trouble, while the profit on their consumption, if any, was to go to the concern. A subscription had been got up among the men, to enable the club to start free of debt. With this they bought wood, and two, who were carpenters, made the plain white benches and tables; one painted and papered the rooms at the cost of the material; while the secretary furbished up the old gas-fittings, and did the repairs in general. I found that he had also contributed his entire stock of books, for I recognised them on the





(Drawn by J. D. WATSON.)

"And o'er Dagmar, as he bent above her,  
Flung he chain and cross of golden sheen."—p. 742.

shelves, among others contributed in the same way. The daily and some weekly papers were subscribed for; and thus they started.

In the lower room, which consisted of the two parlours thrown into one by the removal of the folding-doors, there was a perfect babel of tongues. This was the coffee-room; and the men were talking over their tea and coffee: some were smoking, and a group in one of the corners were playing and watching a game at backgammon. In the reading-room above, perfect silence prevailed. About a dozen young men sat quietly over books or papers, evidently absorbed with what they were about.

I was more impressed than I had expected, or than the poverty and simplicity of the arrangements might seem to warrant. It was their very poverty and simplicity that was so impressive. I uttered a few words, which kindled the enthusiasm of the secretary, as he led the way to the little room, or rather closet, in which he transacted the evening's business.

"Yes," he said, "you say that it is a great good to these young fellows; but I say it is simply salvation. You have only to go over the way and see for yourself. There they are going to ruin as fast as the demon of drink can drive them. We can only catch those who are on the brink; after a while it is useless to try."

It was too true: I knew it.

"Most of the men you have here are unmarried, I should think," I said.

"Yes, and they are the most in need of us, and the most exposed to temptation. Their lodgings are dreary enough; and if they turn out of an evening, there's only the streets, with the cold or the rain, or the crowds; and there stands the public-house, ready, warm and dry, and with a seat to sit down on, and plenty of company, and their mates crying, 'Come along.' I know what it is."

"But you would not think it well for the married men to come here regularly," I returned. "Would it not leave their wives too much alone, and perhaps expose them to temptations, in their turn?"

"They need not come here every night," he replied. "Things aren't always straight at home in such places as we have to live in, and when a man would be in the way he can go to the club, and have his tea and an hour's chat, or reading, and go home to find things put to rights, or sufficiently rested to bear a hand in righting them. He brings a different air into the house with him. It seems to make men healthier, as well as happier, to get something into their lives that's

neither eating nor drinking, nor working for meat and drink."

"I well believe it does. In the lowest, as well as in the highest sense, it is true that man does not live by bread alone. The domestic affections will not lose, but gain, by the cultivation of the social. But what about the women? They seem to me to stand as much in need of improvement as the men. If the men are improved and the women left behind, the improvement will never avail the class. It will be all to do over again in the next generation. The comfort and independence of the workman, it seems to me, depends, to a great extent, on his wife; and the character of the working men of the future depends still more on the mother of his children."

"Yes," he said, bitterly. "My mother had four as fine fellows of sons as ever sat at a working man's table. My father sent us to school, and saw that we were kept pretty comfortable as long as he lived—it was small comfort he got for himself; but when he died, everything went to wreck. We lads often came home and not a bit or a sup for us in the house, nor a fire to warm us. Everything was sold or pawned for drink; and, what was worse, I believe the love of it was born with us—we sucked it in with her milk. Many a time I've almost run along the street, as if I could escape the craving that way; my head swimming, not with drink, but with the desire for it: and many a time I yielded. Thank God, the temptation grows less and less, instead of growing more and more, as it was before I got married. Yes, I was on the very verge. My brothers all went over. It killed them all!" he said, fiercely, and as if he had to do with a deadly incarnate foe.

"You exclude beer from the club, of course," I said, after a little pause.

"Entirely," he added. "I am not a pledged abstainer; and I don't think we have any among us. I hate it too much to need the pledge; but I mean to take it, for it helps to hold some back when nothing else will; and, at any rate, it's a declaration of war."

The next time I called on the young wife, she showed me the abstainer's card, framed and glazed, and hung up over the mantelshelf. She was getting reconciled to the club, too; for there had been a series of tea-parties, and the wives and sweethearts had been invited to tea in detachments. The hard work was over, and Tom was more at home; and, somehow, it was not so dreary when she knew exactly the place where he was, and how it looked, and what he was about.

(To be continued.)

## THE HALF-SISTERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DEEPPDALE VICARAGE," "MARK WARREN," ETC.

## CHAPTER XLV.



ER face was white and scared; she looked at Helen as though she were bewildered. Helen had to repeat and to explain; nay, to repeat again, ere Sophy would believe the tidings of her uncle's ruin. When at length she did believe it, ah, then, it was very sad indeed!

Her head drooped; she covered her face with her hands; it seemed as though all the joy had died out of her heart, once so light and glad. She felt, for the time, overwhelmed.

Her uncle ruined and gone!—her home uprooted—disgrace fallen upon it. Sorrow, misery, and pain, where late there had been wealth, ease, luxury. Sophy knew little of the world's shipwrecks and storms: this was her first experience.

By-and-by she raised her head, with a touch of her old cheerfulness. A happy thought had occurred to her.

"It is very shocking, Miss Percival. I cannot bear to think of it. But, oh! why did not my uncle tell me?" And she clasped her hands eagerly.

"Tell you, my poor child!" said Helen, pityingly.

"Yes, tell me. I would have helped them!—I would have saved them!" And Sophy started up in her earnestness.

"Where are they gone to? I will save them now! Oh! it is delightful to be rich. Thank God, I am rich!" And her cheek glowed with generous enthusiasm.

"Sophy, my dear, sit down," said Helen, in a tone of deep feeling. "Indeed, you can do nothing—nothing whatever."

"How can you say so?" cried Sophy, impulsively.

"Of course I shall go to them, and give them as much of my money as they want—my uncle is getting an old man—and we will have a nice house somewhere, and live in peace and happiness. Poor uncle—poor aunt!"—and her eyes filled with tears of compassion—"why did you not tell me you were in trouble?"

Helen turned away her head to hide her tears. She could not help but weep to think of what was coming.

"Where are they? I wish you would tell me," exclaimed Sophy, impatient at not receiving an answer.

Helen shook her head.

"No one can tell you that, dear; no one knows."

"Then I will find out! I will advertise; I will set off and search for them. Oh! Miss Percival, there must be some kind of clue; they must have left some trace behind them: it is not possible that they can be quite gone!"

Helen was silent. She had taken Sophy's hand, and, with gentle force, compelled her again to be seated.

"Sit down, my dear, and listen to me."

Helen's face was white and tearful. Sophy's was flushed and excited.

"How do you know, Sophy, that, even if you could find them, you would be able to give them help?"

Her tone was full of distress. Sophy looked at her with surprise.

"Of course, I could help them. My money is quite safe—it is in the funds. What makes you say that, Miss Percival?"

"Because," said Helen, getting still paler, "was not Mr. Chillingham your guardian?"

"Yes; but he had no power over the money. Poor, dear papa made a will to forbid it being taken out of the funds. If you mean to insinuate that my uncle has been dishonest," said Sophy, with a touch of indignation, "instead of simply unfortunate, you are very wrong. It was the panic that ruined my uncle."

Helen put her arm round the girl, and drew her close to her.

"Sophy, my darling, can you bear to hear more ill news still? It breaks my heart to tell you." Helen was now, in spite of her attempts at self-control, actually weeping. "But, indeed, you must know." She paused. Sophy again started up.

"If you are going to tell me that my uncle has been dishonest, I cannot bear it. Though, even if he had been, I should help him just the same!" added she, vehemently; and the tears streaming from her eyes. "Oh! how very wretched it has made me."

"It has made me, wretched, too, dear. But still you must be told. It was a temptation to your uncle, when he came into such straits, to tamper with your money."

"Tamper with my money?"

"Yes, dear. No doubt he meant to put it back again. He thought, perhaps, that you would be the gainer rather than the loser; but in such great concerns a man may soon get out of his depth. Your uncle did, and then it was not so easy as he supposed to put himself straight."

"But my money was in the funds, Miss Percival. You are under some great mistake," cried Sophy. "It would have been illegal to touch it."

"I know it would. But he was in difficulties, and, it might be, getting desperate. Some men would do anything rather than have their affairs made public. He fancied that this step might save him."

"I do not believe it, Miss Percival! I will not!" cried Sophy, impulsively. "Uncle would never have been guilty of such an act. Pray, who told you?"

"Mr. Westbury."

The name was like an electric shock to Sophy.

She trembled violently; indeed, her limbs seemed hardly able to support her.

Helen rose.

"Dear child, let us go home!" said she, pityingly.

"No; not till you have told me all. I cannot bear this suspense. Even if he *did* touch it, driven by his necessities, I can forgive him. He would not take much; perhaps I shall never miss it.

Helen was silent.

"I shall never miss it; and no one can guess what he may not have suffered. I want to tell him I forgive him; I want still to help him."

Her soft blue eyes, full of yearning compassion, were fixed on Helen.

"I want *still* to find out where he is."

Helen was silent. It was a silence, though, which was full of expression.

"Tell me, Miss Percival, how much he took? You are not kind to hide it from me. I am so anxious to know the worst."

"Sophy, my child, I am afraid to tell you. I dare not," said Helen, with a shudder.

"Oh, but that is foolish! Even if he took the half—"

"He has done that," said Helen, quickly.

"Well, still I have enough, and to spare; still I am rich, and shall want for nothing; still I can help them."

There was a world of tenderness, and of forgiveness too, in her voice. Helen's heart ached at the sound.

"You cannot help them, dear. It has been worse even than that."

"Worse than half! Oh! that was very cruel," cried Sophy, her lip quivering. "My uncle should not have done that. Yet, even then, I shall not be quite ruined," added she, with a smile. "I should be a poor little thing to lose all my money. I cannot think what would become of me."

"God would protect you," replied Helen, in a tremulous voice. "He does protect those who are destitute and oppressed."

"Destitute, do you mean to say—" and her face blanched, and her eyes looked terrified. "How can you use such a word to me?"—and she laid her hand tightly on Helen's arm—"how dare you?"

Helen took the hand in hers, and pressed it tenderly; but she did not unsay a single word she had uttered.

"My uncle cannot have taken it all; he cannot have reduced me to beggary!"

She said it with a kind of shriek; a frightful reality was pressing upon her—the existence of a calamity such as she had never so much as imagined.

Helen did not speak; she could not at that moment trust her voice to do so.

"Oh!" continued Sophy, eagerly, "tell me that I am wrong!—please, pray, say one word! Dear Miss Percival, you must know how terrible that would be. I do not think I could bear it." And she pressed her hands to her forehead.

To soothe her with the wisdom and the kindness of which she possessed so much, was now Helen's office. She did not dare to disguise the fact; she had to relate the story in all its native ugliness. There was no alternative; Sophy must know the worst: she must know that in her uncle's fall her own hopes were shipwrecked. Had Mr. Chillingham seen that white face, those tearless, terror-stricken eyes, I think he would have needed no other punishment. For Sophy did not weep; for some time, in fact, she uttered not a word. She sat on the grass, her eyes fixed on the fair-flowing stream that glided peacefully by, her young face stricken into a look older, and sadder, than had ever rested there before.

When Helen, having in vain attempted to rouse her, said, at length, "Come, my dear, let us go home," Sophy rose mechanically. But still she did not speak. Once or twice she gave a little shudder, and she kept Helen's hand tightly clasped in hers. But this was all. The blow had evidently stunned her.

Sad, indeed, was the walk back through the grassy lanes and smooth meadows. In vain the birds piped their sweetest music; in vain all the soothing influences of Nature were at hand to cheer and to console: Sophy could not as yet be comforted; her little world seemed to have fallen in ruins about her. When they reached home, she was still silent; but as Helen opened the door, Sophy said, hurriedly—

"Let me go to your room, Miss Percival. I want to be alone, just for a little time."

And, scarcely waiting for permission, she fled upstairs. Helen would have followed—and, indeed, did—but the door was locked.

Within the room Sophy was sobbing, on the floor, as if her heart would break.

#### CHAPTER LXVI.

"I'm sure, ma'am, you've the most beautiful hair I ever saw in my life; and I've been lady's maid this twenty year or more! Why, it's for all the world like silk!"

"I always had nice hair," said Dolores, complacently. She was sitting in an easy chair, while the maid provided for her by Archibald was arranging her long glossy curls: a state of things which suited Dolores to admiration.

She and her husband had not returned home more than an hour ago. They had travelled from London by express, and had found the house all ready, and an establishment of servants to receive them: a state of things again which exactly suited Dolores.

She was in her dressing-room. It was fitted up with every luxury; and the costliest jewels and laces, and other articles, betokening the wealth of which she was now the mistress, were scattered in heedless profusion. One such article would have been beyond her wildest dreams a few years ago; but nothing seemed unattainable to her now.

"I should think you are glad to get home, ma'am,"



said the attendant, as she finished her mistress's toilet. "It is such a nice place, and you must have been tired of travelling."

"I am never tired of travelling," said Dolores, in a quick, restless tone; "but I wanted to get home. I wanted to see Helen."

There was a short sigh as she uttered the word.

A minute after, she rose, and pushed back the chair.

"You can go, Wilkins. I am ready, when Mr. Cranstead comes in."

"He is come in, ma'am."

"And dressed for dinner?"

"No, ma'am; I don't fancy he means to dress."

"Very well. You can go."

She said it in a sharp tone, as though she were displeased. When the woman had retired, she walked to the great cheval glass, and stood a few minutes before it.

Yes, she was the same Dolores. There were the dark eyes, the piquant head, the long tresses of glossy black. But the eyes had a shade of expression that was not there before. The mouth was harder, and the corners of it drawn tighter. The smile was not so dimpled, and so sunny as it had been. But she was the same Dolores, only rich, and the wife of Archibald Cranstead.

Her dress was very handsome. She wore a dark blue silk, "that would have stood on end," as Wilkins observed, with its own richness. The dress had a berthe of point lace. Her neck and arms were bare, but she had a gold chain clasped round her throat, with the locket containing her father's hair. Her bracelets were of gold, and she wore on her head the same gold circlet that had glittered at the Trenthams' party.

As she stood before the glass, she smiled to see herself so fine. It was her first evening at her own home. It was the second anniversary of her wedding-day, and she had paid unusual attention to her toilet. Was it to please her husband?

A minute after, she walked to the window, and settled herself in her old attitude, her elbows on the window-sill. She might have been looking, as she had been once so fond of doing, towards the towers of Cranstead Abbey.

Her face now began to express more plainly the kind of change that had come upon it. The corners of her mouth tightened, and her eyes had a cold, stern expression. The window looked out on the garden—an old English garden, with terraced walks, and smooth-shaven lawn, and a plenitude of gay-coloured flowers. But the sight did not appear to gladden her, or to soften the cold, hard look. Yet the garden was hers: she was mistress of it all!

Presently, the gong sounded for dinner. Then Dolores started from her fit of musing, and prepared to go down-stairs. She did not flash from the room with one of her fairy-like movements. She walked slowly—for her, deliberately. She had assumed an air of stateliness. Perhaps she thought it became her. On she went, her silken train rustling behind her.

She opened the door of the drawing-room. It was empty. Then Dolores frowned. She would have liked Archibald to have taken her down to dinner. She had "ideas," as Wilkins said. She would have liked to sweep down the staircase, leaning on her husband's arm; but there was no husband present. Her eye darted one of those flashes which Archibald used to say were enough to annihilate him. But it flashed not on Archibald—only on empty space.

She went down the staircase by herself. The butler opened the dining-room door with ceremonious politeness, and she passed in.

The table was set for dinner. There was a magnificent display of silver, and the dinner-service was perfect in its way; but the surroundings were not equal. In undress, slovenly, and with his cap on, Archibald was loling on a sofa doing something at his gun. He looked up as his wife entered.

"On my word, Dolores, how fine we are!"

The flash came again, and her lip curled; but she did not reply; the presence of the butler restrained her. When, a few minutes after, the butler went to the door, she said, in a quick, defiant manner, "Why did you not make yourself fit to be seen?"

"Because I prefer being as I am: you are smart enough for both. If you will come here, I will kiss you."

He said it with his old insolent air. She set her teeth together; her lip quivered; but the reappearance of the butler stopped any remark she might have flung out at that juncture: and with the reappearance of the butler began the dinner.

It was the first dinner she had eaten in her own house. It was very sumptuous. There were all the delicacies of the season; and we know she was somewhat of an epicure. But she seemed to have lost that keen relish with which she devoured the tit-bits provided for her by Helen. She did not care to eat. The dinner, as far as she was concerned, was like a splendid farce. She sat at table with a defiant air. Not one word did she address to Archibald.

When the cloth was removed, she rose. He had not taken much notice of her. He had been glancing into a newspaper, when he was not busy with his dinner. He did not see the angry flush on her cheek, the compression of her mouth; if he had, it would have made no difference.

"She has ridden roughshod over me this long time," he had said; "now it is my turn!"

When she rose, he looked up. "Won't you stay, Dolores? No ceremony, you know."

She gave a defiant toss to her head by way of reply. "Oh, very well, I don't want you! I only want my wine;" and he laid hold of the decanter.

Still she made no answer: she swept out of the room, her train rustling behind her.

Archibald laughed rudely. "Here's to your health, my lady," said he, holding up his glass. "You're vastly proud, but you must knock under now, my beautiful Dolores!"

She did not hear this speech; she was in the drawing-room. It was a spacious apartment, with

great windows and heavy gilt cornices; and it was filled with new and costly furniture. The pier glass over the marble mantelpiece reflected her figure as she entered, and the plate glass between the windows gave it again, full length.

The young wife newly come to her home!

Everything around her was new and splendid. No expense had been spared, and the effect was dazzling, and a success. Yet the girlish figure in its silken robes, its jewels, its long shining tresses, looked solitary in the midst of all. She was alone!

There have been women who can never cease to recall with tender emotion this "coming home;" who can never cease to remember the fond eyes that looked a welcome—the sweet presence of him they had left all to sojourn with: but these women had loved—Dolores never had.

Still, even she must have felt some want: her face expressed it, as she glanced round on all this dreary splendour. Even she, in this hour of triumph, would have liked some one to whisper, "It is your home, dearest, and *mine*."

She was not given to sentiment. She sat down presently in the most comfortable chair she could find. She would have gone to sleep—a favourite custom after dinner, but that she was too busy smoothing her silk dress, and stealing admiring glances at herself in the plate glass opposite. She sat a long time, absorbed in this occupation, when there came a footstep along the corridor. A minute after, the door opened, and there entered Helen.

Dolores sprang up. "Helen!"

She was in her arms, kissing her face, her hands, her hair, uttering all the time little cries of rapture.

"Helen, my darling! my good—dear—precious Helen! how delightful of you to come! How glad I am! Helen, my own Helen!" and laying her cheek against Helen's cheek, her arms tightly wound round her, Dolores actually burst into tears.

The tears were in Helen's eyes as well, and had been all along. It was almost too much joy to have her sister once more in her embrace.

"Dolores, I have so longed to see you again!"

"And so have I longed to see you, Helen! And now sit down, dear, and let me look at you. How are you, Helen?" and the sisters sat on the sofa, their hands fast locked in each other's.

"I am quite well," replied Helen, calmly. "You look well, Dolores!"

"Oh, yes! I am always well. There is nothing ever the matter with me."

"And happy?"

There was a slight hesitation as she pronounced the words, "Oh, yes! why not? I am very rich. Look, Helen, this is my drawing-room."

"It is a beautiful room," said Helen, admiringly, "very beautiful indeed!"

"You would never have guessed that I should have such a room as this, Helen."

"No, dear."

"Ah! I have married to some purpose," and Dolores gave a short, dry laugh.

A few minutes' silence followed this speech.

"I can do just as I like. I have a carriage and a pair of horses, and a lady's maid to dress and undress me. What more can I want?"

Helen kissed her affectionately; but Helen's ideas on that point differed somewhat from those of Dolores. Helen would have wanted more, far more.

"Is not this dress pretty, Helen?"

"Very pretty, dear."

Helen had on a plain black silk, without any ornament whatever.

"I have more dresses than I can wear while they are in the fashion. Only think what a fright I used to be in those shabby old gowns at home! Yet I love to think of home!"

She said it with a stifled sigh. Her eyes had a wistful expression—a look of vague unrest and dissatisfaction. But the look vanished as quickly as it came.

"You will stay and have tea with me, Helen. Come, and I will show you my room."

Helen drew back.

"It is the first day of your coming home, dear."

"What on earth does that signify?"

"Only that your husband would very likely prefer that you should be alone with him."

"What, Archibald?" She laughed the same short, dry laugh. "I don't think he will care—" She stopped, and threw her arms round Helen's neck. "Darling Helen, it will be cruel if you do not stay!"

"Then I will stay, dear; I should like it," and she pressed Dolores fondly to her heart. She knew how it was from the very beginning; she knew that it was to her Dolores must come for affection.

Then Dolores led the way to the suite of rooms which, as she told Helen, were her very own. There was the morning room, the boudoir, the dressing-room, the sleeping-room.

"Quite a palace in miniature," Helen said, smiling.

"And if you will come to-morrow, I will show you the rest of the house, and I wonder what you will say then!" exclaimed Dolores: for Dolores was not a little proud of the grand things which, in these days, belonged to her.

When the sisters went back to the drawing-room, the tea was on the table. Dolores began to make it from the silver urn that stood in readiness. At this juncture the door opened, and there came in Archibald Cranstead.

Helen had never seen him since that interview she and Archibald had once had, in the old-fashioned sitting-room at home;—the interview in which she had told him that Dolores refused his addresses. The same feeling of distrust was in her heart, but she stifled it, as best she could: he was the husband of Dolores.

She rose, and came to meet him. He stared at her rudely,—Helen thought, with his old insolence of manner. Then, after bestowing on her a brief nod, he turned to his wife.

"Just come here, Dolores, I want to speak to you."

(To be continued.)

LOTTIE'S WHITE FROCK.



H, mamma! Miss Wells is going to take us all to Forest Farm to-morrow afternoon," exclaimed Lottie Clifton, rushing into the parlour where her mamma was sitting at work. "It is to be a juvenile picnic party. All the girls are going. We are to spend the afternoon in the wood gathering blackberries, and then go on to the farm to tea. I may go, may I not, mamma? I said I was sure you would let me," she added.

"Yes, you may go, certainly, as your governess is going with you, Lottie."

"And may I wear my white frock and blue sash, mamma?" asked Lottie.

"No, my dear. Your pink gingham would be much more suitable, I think, for a ramble in the woods; and another thing, your bonnet would not do to wear with a white dress."

"Oh, mamma! you surely would not let me wear this shabby old bonnet," said Lottie, swinging it on the table by the string as she spoke.

"You surely would not wish to wear your best hat," said her mamma.

Lottie looked down upon the floor and pouted.

"But mamma——"

"Lottie, say no more just now," interrupted her mamma.

When Lottie was going to school next morning, her mamma said, "I am obliged to go out upon business this morning, Lottie, and may not be home until late this evening; but Mary will have your dinner ready by the time you come home from school, and I will put your things out ready for you to dress."

Upon her return home she found dinner prepared as her mamma had said, and as soon as she had finished she ran up-stairs, anxious to see what things had been laid out for her to wear. How disappointing! On the bed lay the pink gingham frock and drab cloth mantle—not even her black silk—and on the table her clean stockings, pocket-handkerchief, and white-thread gloves. Lottie's first impulse was to sit down and cry, but she did not yield to it, she went to have a peep at her finery instead. How nice the clean white muslin dress looked, so much nicer than the shabby pink gingham; and then in the corner of the drawer she saw her best boots. Surely, her mamma must have forgotten them, she could not intend her to go out in any others. Without stopping to consider the point any longer, she took them out and put them on. Just as she was about to put on the despised pink gingham, there came a knock at the door, and the next minute she heard the rustle of a schoolfellow's silk dress.

"No! I won't wear that ugly thing!" she said, indignantly throwing it aside. "I shall be home before mamma, so she will know nothing about it; for I shall take care not to soil the 'white frock.' And she ran to the drawer and took it out.

Of course the old bonnet could not be worn with a white dress and blue sash, and so her best hat, mantle, and gloves were put on, and then the two girls set off to join their companions.

They soon reached the wood, and then considerable care was necessary to save their clothes from being torn, for the brambles grew thick and close to the narrow wood-paths. Most of the girls had wisely prepared for this, and put on cotton or gingham dresses; and they laughed and ran and shouted, heartily enjoying the fun of being caught occasionally. But two or three, like Lottie Clifton, had determined to be fine, and wore white muslin, or thin dresses; and these were no sooner caught than torn. Lottie was in terrible fear lest hers should share the same fate; and she had to fold it close round her, and take each step very carefully, to save it. Before she had been out half an hour, she wished she had obeyed her mother's wishes, for, added to the uncomfortable feeling the act itself caused, she was not able to enjoy herself at all, for fear of spoiling some of her things. The others were all in haste to reach the blackberry-bushes, and pushed on through the narrow briar-crossed paths regardless of all impediments; but poor Lottie could not do this, she was obliged to let them all pass her, and follow slowly and carefully by herself. Two or three times she was on the point of turning back to change her things, but she was afraid if she did so she should not be able to trace her companions again, and this induced her to keep on, their ringing laughter guiding her when she could no longer see them.

At length the point of attraction was gained, and she saw her schoolfellows all busily engaged in picking the luscious, ripe blackberries that hung in clusters from the prickly bushes.

"Why, Lottie, we began to think you were lost," said Ellen Raymond, who had pinned her dress all round her, as close as she could, that she might join in the fun. "But come along, now you are here, and begin gathering. We want to fill that large basket between us to take to Widow Williams. Miss Wells suggested it. Is it not capital?"

"Yes, just look at Minnie's face and hands and dress," laughed another. "Oh! you are in a state!"

"I don't mind the stains at all, or the tears in my frock either, because it is only an old one; but mamma said it would do nicely for a blackberry-excursion."

Poor Lottie wished her dress was only an old one, that she might join in the fun going on around her; but the sight of her companion's dress and person deterred her from going near the dangerous bushes; and she drew back, looking very rueful at the tumbled white frock, which she was able to drop now, as she stood on a clear, grassy knoll.

The farmhouse where they were going to tea was

on the further side of the wood, and it was arranged that they should go there about six o'clock, and after resting and having tea, set off home through the wood, where they would take up the basket of blackberries they had gathered in the afternoon. About five o'clock, however, a few drops of rain were felt, and Miss Wells desired them to leave off gathering the fruit and hurry off to the farmhouse at once, as she feared there would be a heavy shower.

"Now follow me," she said, "as quickly as you can, and keep all together."

She had scarcely finished speaking, when the rain came down in a drenching shower, which made the girls run as fast as they could towards their haven of refuge—the farmhouse. All followed their governess but poor Lottie, and she, fearing the rain which beat down upon the unsheltered path would spoil her sash and hat-ribbons, resolved to stand under a tree until the shower was over. Not a drop could penetrate through the thick leafy screen under which she was then standing, and she resolved to stay there and find her way to the farmhouse alone.

Lottie began to feel afraid as the gathering gloom of the skies slowly over-shadowed everything in the silent wood, silent save the steady patter of the rain-drops, and the frightened cry of the startled birds as they noted the coming storm.

In a short time distant thunder was heard rumbling, and presently it grew louder and clearer, and vivid blue lightning seemed to run along upon the ground, mingled with the tiny streams of water formed by the rain. Lottie forgot her dress and hat now; she was in a terrible fright at being alone in the wood, exposed to the terrible storm. Her tree, too, was of little use to protect her, for every leaf now formed a tiny cascade, down which the water ran to drench the little girl standing beneath, so that at last she thought she should get less wet standing out on the grassy knoll. But of what use was it to stand there? she thought; no one would come to fetch her—they would not even miss her, perhaps—and the tears ran down her cheeks, and she sobbed bitterly. But at this moment a terrible clap of thunder broke over the wood, louder and longer than any that had preceded it, and with a frightened scream, Lottie dashed down the path taken by her companions. She had not gone many yards before she slipped and fell, for the rain had made the path slippery. Her face and arms were scratched and torn by the briars, but she did not notice that or her muddy, dragged frock and sash; all she thought of was, getting out of the wood. Another blinding flash of lightning, and then another fall, and Lottie dashed on down the path, heedless of where she was going, on and on, until the path became more and more entangled, and the under-wood thicker and closer, and more impassable; and, in sheer exhaustion, she was obliged sit down.

The storm had rolled away now, but the shadows of evening were coming on, and no dwelling of any sort was in sight. What was she to do? If she could not find her way out she would have to spend the

night in that terrible wood; and she got up again, resolving to retrace her steps to the grassy knoll, and set out afresh from there to the farmhouse. She looked down at herself as she stood up, and could scarcely credit the evidence of her senses. The white frock, of which she had felt so proud, and which had been the cause of all her trouble, hung in wet, dragged tatters round her waist, her sash was quite gone, and she was wet up to her knees.

Wet, cold, frightened, and miserable, she hastened back; but, alas! the wood-paths were alike, and seemed to branch off in so many directions, that she knew not which to take. It had left off raining, and in the more open parts of the forest it was still light, but every path that Lottie tried seemed to lead only to the dense, dark, bramble-covered parts of the wood; and at last, with a bitter cry of despair, Lottie sank down and gave herself up for lost. She should never see her dear mamma again, she thought, for she could never live until the morning in that terrible place. Then she tried to pray, but the thought of the disobedience that had caused this trouble made her afraid. At last she ventured to ask God's forgiveness, and resolved, if she was spared, never again to disobey her mamma. After this she took her pocket-book and pencil out of her pocket and wrote:

Dear, dear mamma, I have been very naughty and disobedient; but I have prayed to God to forgive me, and I think he will. If I should die to-night in the wood, please forgive Lottie. She put her pencil back into her pocket, and then looked up and saw the stars come out one by one, until at length, overpowered with weariness, her head drooped and rested against the trunk of a tree, and she fell fast asleep.

Meanwhile, search was being made for her in every direction. Miss Wells did not miss her for some time, her attention being occupied in drying the clothes of those who had followed her to the farmhouse. It was not until this was all over, and they were seated round the table in the large kitchen, that Lottie was missed. Search was made for her at once, but she could not be found; and at length it was supposed that she must have turned homewards previous to the shower coming on. But when Miss Wells called at her home to ascertain if this was the case, and found she had not arrived, she immediately dispatched several men, and then returned herself to the wood to search for her.

Hour after hour they walked up and down the lonely wood-paths, calling "Lottie, Lottie;" that awoke the echoes, but no answering voice. Her papa and mamma both joined in the search; and at last, after walking about several hours, saw the blue sash hanging by a bramble; then little bits of the white muslin frock, hung here and there, showed them where she had turned; and at last they saw Lottie herself—poor, dirty, ragged, scratched Lottie—sleeping, with the pocket-book open in her hand.

"Poor child!" said her mamma, tenderly, as she read the pencilled words; "her white frock has brought her heavy punishment."

EMMA LESLIE.